

I LOVE MY CHURCH DAY

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Introduction: Life is about learning to love! I really do believe it is one of the most difficult and important lessons in life we can ever learn, especially for a believer. Would you believe that the Bible says it proves that we really are saved?

1 John 3:14 *If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead. (NLT)*

The Scripture says loving other believers is the evidence that we belong to God's family. Our love for other believers is the fruit flowing from our relationship with God because we have learned to abide in Him daily.

John 15:5 *"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing." (NLT)*

Please understand it is not natural for us to have a disagreement with another believer and immediately say, "Hey, no big deal. Let's do it your way!" Is that Biblical? Yes, but it takes tremendous growth and maturity in one's faith.

Philippians 2:3 *Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. (NLT)*

Remember that we become members of God's family through a supernatural death-to-old-life transformation!

Ephesians 2:1-5 *Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. ² You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. ³ All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. ⁴ But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, ⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) (NLT)*

This transformation moves us from being selective about who we love or whether or not to return love to being free and unconditional with our love.

1 John 4:7-8 *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. (ESV)*

The scripture says without this Christ-like love, we can't possibly claim to be a part of God's family.

1 John 3:10 *So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God. (NLT)*

Ask yourself, "Am I only deep down concerned about my own needs and not really focus on others interest above my own?" You may at some point begin to question, "Have I really been transformed by Christ?" A heart that has been transformed by God is a heart that is learning to love others unconditionally. Warren Wiersbe said, "Real love is always much more about giving than gaining." Real love is the fruit that proves we have a genuine root in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Can you point to a specific time in your life when you felt God calling and

convicting you by His Holy Spirit and you said “yes” and surrendered to Jesus coming into your heart to transform it? Make sure the issue is settled and then you can decide who you are going to live for—yourself or God.

We all hesitate, wondering “Will God really give me the strength to love like He’s asking me to love?” Do not worry one moment about that, for once you make the choice to live for Him the Bible promises in Him is everything we need.

2 Peter 1:3 *By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. (NLT)*

Does it happen overnight? We all know battling our flesh is a daily occurrence. The first step in learning to love like Jesus starts by committing yourself completely to Jesus Christ.

John 1:12-13 *But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. (NLT)*

Not just a human decision, but reborn from above and filled with the person of God through His Holy Spirit indwelling us. His Spirit is the One who comes into your life and gives you the power to die to the flesh daily, as well as the power to love others with a godly standard that is opposite of what the world will teach you. If you have stayed with me up to this point, and even if you haven’t been doing a very good job of loving other believers, that’s OK. God will help you begin to grow in your capacity to love others with His love as you begin to walk with Him daily in His Word.

A point to ponder: Loving other believers is the evidence that we belong to God’s family.

A question to consider: If you were put on trial for your faith and your expressions of love were the only evidence, what would the verdict be?

Everyone longs to belong.

1 Peter 2:17a *Respect everyone, and love the family of believers. (NLT)*

Ephesians 2:19 *So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family. (NLT)*

Saying “**I love my Church**” is much more than saying “I love my school”, “I love my car” or “I love to dance”. We are not an organization, or an institution, or just a group of like-minded people. We are a family forged by the fires of God’s love, and we are striving to be an example to the world of what a real family looks like.

Romans 12:10 *Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. (NLT)*

We are to love each other like brothers and sisters and be an example of an authentic Christian community where we are accepted, supported, and challenged to fully live out the purposes God has for our lives. We belong and we help other believers know that they belong. Family is synonymous with a deep, unwavering commitment to support one another, no matter how rough or messy it may get! You do things for a family that you wouldn’t do for anyone else. You make allowances for family members that you might not make for anyone else. As you all well know, the family I grew up in was a broken model which did not include a dad, but I had a loving mom who had come through a shattered relationship. A lot of people like me have hurting hearts because of the past; the good news is God wants to provide every one of us the things longed for in a family. He can do that in a Christian community. We all have in some way been like

Humpty Dumpty who fell off the wall. God is the One who can put all the pieces back together again and teach us to love and develop healthy relationships. We'll learn that it takes honesty, vulnerability, effort, and a lot, and then a lot more, of forgiveness to make relationships work.

A point to ponder: Love must be learned. It takes a lot of time to unlearn some old things and to learn some new things.

A question to consider: How devoted are you to your church family?

God designed life for us to learn to love one another like He loves us. Every day involves some serious on-the-job training. We get it through family, and a real eye opener for me was in moving to college and acquiring roommates. People wear your clothes, eat your stuff, love themselves more than you. You begin to realize God is making use of all those things - pain and suffering, joy and comfort, opposition and cooperation - to transform us into people who love fully and deeply. Love others urgently every day because today could be our last.

Hebrews 6:11 *Our great desire is that you will keep on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true. (NLT)*

The curriculum of love is not something we learn once and then put it behind us, but rather, it is a lifetime course. The greatest rewards in heaven will be for those who loved the most. It really does prove to the world that we are Christ followers. **(John 13:34-35)**

I love you, Brookwood, "a bushel and a peck and a hug around the neck" with God's agape love!